

BOOK REVIEW

Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences. Committee on Science and Creationism, J. D. Ebert, Chairman. 1984 28 p. paperback. Available from National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20418. \$4.00 (10 for \$1.75 ea. postpaid)

Reviews of Thirty-one Creationist Books. S. Weinberg (ed). 1984 National Center for Science Education, Inc. Syosset, N.Y. with support from the Iowa Academy of Science. 71 p. paperback. Available from Stan Weinberg, 156 East Alta Vista, Ottumwa, IA 52501. \$5.50 postpaid.

As the designated adviser to the Federal Government on scientific matters, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) felt it would be a "dereliction of our responsibility to academic and intellectual freedom and to the fundamental principles of scientific thought" to remain silent on creationism. This attractive 21.5 x 28 cm booklet was requested by the Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

The front cover is a color photograph of earth taken by Apollo 16 astronauts in 1972. The rear cover is a flat-earth map made about the year 600. In his preface, Frank Press, president of NAS, writes, "Teaching creationism is like asking our children to believe on faith, without recourse to time-tested evidence, that the dimensions of the world are the same as those depicted in maps drawn in the days before Columbus set sail with his three small ships, when we *know* from factual observations that they are really quite different."

The booklet deals with five central issues: 1) The nature of science, 2) Scientific evidence on the origin of the Universe and the Earth, 3) The scientific standing of biological evolution, 4) Human evolution, 5) The origin of life. Eleven color and seven black and white illustrations illuminate text points. The writing is interesting, clear and concise. The evidence for evolution and the refutation of creationist arguments are presented in a straightforward manner understandable by the general reader.

It is pointed out that "Evolution pervades all biological phenomena. To ignore that it occurred or to classify it as a form of dogma is to deprive the student of the most fundamental organizational concept in the biological sciences. No other biological concept has been more extensively tested and more thoroughly corroborated than the evolutionary history of organisms." The conclusion is a forceful rejection of creationism. "It is, therefore, our unequivocal conclusion that creationism, with its accounts of the origin of life by supernatural means, is not science. It subordinates evidence to statements based on authority and revelation. Its documentation is almost entirely limited to the special publications of its advocates. And its central hypothesis is not subject to change in light of new data or demonstration of error. Moreover, when the evidence for creationism has been subject to the tests of the scientific method, it has been found invalid."

Concerned parents and teachers would do well to read this excellent booklet and to supply each member of their local school board with a copy.

The second book, *Reviews*, can save science teachers and librarians a great deal of time and energy. Reading the creationist literature is not only time consuming, it is also dreadfully depressing when one considers that such material is being presented as science to an unsuspecting public. The 31 reviews range from one to five pages and are written by science teachers and scientists including such authorities as G. Brent Dalrymple, Stephen G. Brush, and Joel Cracraft.

The major works of the creationists are considered on their scientific merit. No book receives an acceptable rating. This is not surprising. Creationist authors are well known for their failure to cite extensive scientific literature that conclusively demonstrates the points they object to and for their misrepresentation of the works they do choose to cite. Ample documentation of these dishonest methods are given in many of the reviews.

Some capsule conclusions by the reviewers of the first 11 creationist books include the following:

Chemical Evolution by S. E. Aw — "By page 165 Aw resorts to redbaiting, strongly suggesting that evolutionists are atheists and often-times communists. Such scurrilous material alone, in what is presumed to be a book of science, makes the book unacceptable for school use."

Origin and Destiny of the Earth's Magnetic Field by T. G. Barnes — "... gross factual errors and distortions... pervade this book." "... the knowledgeable scientist will find the book either amusing, outrageous, or both."

Origins: Two Models by R. B. Bliss — "The information bearing on creationism, as science, is absurd." "... the book fails to teach science in any meaningful way."

Fossils: Key to the Present by R. Bliss et al. — "The special pleading is so glaring that the book does not qualify as a science textbook, but as creationist propaganda. It is in fact a tract carrying the message of Genesis in the trappings of pseudoscience."

Origin of Life/Evolution: Creation by R. B. Bliss and G. E. Parker — "... out of date, inaccurate in depicting the way scientific knowledge grows, and significantly based on argument by false analogy. I see nothing to recommend its use in public school science classes."

The Waters Above by J. C. Dillow — "Like many of the creationist books before it, [it] seems to be one more millstone around the neck of a discredited pseudoscience."

Fossils/Hard Facts from the Earth by N. Fox — "... scientific publications are misrepresented, and unsubstantiated 'facts' [dinosaurs and human footprints together] are presented as valid scientific evidence."

Ape-Man: Fact or Fallacy? 2nd ed. by M. Bowden — "This book is typical of the creationist brand of science. It offers no new facts, only disputes the work of others, attacks scientists personally, and supports the irrational view that conspiracies are everywhere in science."

The Rise of the Evolution Fraud by M. Boden — "... this is a rather crudely done religious tract..." "... suggest... that [evolutionist] are conspirators in a Satanic plot..." Because of both the malice of its tone and the inaccuracy of its content, the book is entirely unsuitable for use in schools."

Evolution: The Fossils Say No! by D. T. Gish — "Gish's book(s) represent religion in the trappings of science to the detriment of both..."

Handy Dandy Evolution Refuter by R. E. Kofahl — "... this book is devoid of any scientific or pedagogical value. Its interest is primarily religious, and its approach is to restructure scientific knowledge in order to fit a particular religious tradition."

There are reviews of 20 other creationist books, all of which are found to be grossly deficient as science.

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